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No. 57.

THERE IS ROOM FOR YOU.

ANN T—— was an intelligent and affectionate girl about seventeen years of age, and had enjoyed all the advantages of pious parentage and education. She had attended the Sabbath-school from a very early period, and had become well acquainted with the leading truths of the Bible, but had never felt their power in her heart. This fact was a cause of much anxiety to her Christian friends, who constantly prayed God to awaken her slumbering conscience, and to change her heart by the influence of his Holy Spirit.

For a long time these prayers remained unanswered; but at length Ann seemed seriously impressed with the importance of spiritual things. Her friends noticed that she had much trouble and uneasiness in her mind, and yet when they spoke to her about her soul, she only shook her head, or else she would burst into tears and say it was of no use to talk to her, for they could do her no good. Often did her friends point her to Jesus, as one who could relieve her of all her distress; but she could not be brought to look to him as her Saviour. She used even to declare sometimes that it was impossible for her ever to be saved.

One Sabbath evening her minister preached from Luke 14; 22: "And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room." He explained in a very impressive manner that there was room for every sinner in

God's infinite mercy, in the Saviour's loving heart, in the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, in the church of the redeemed on earth, and in the glorious kingdom of God in heaven. He appealed to all his unconverted hearers to believe these good tidings, and to come at once to their merciful Father by the only way which was opened to them, through the merits of the crucified Redeemer. And he showed clearly from the Bible, that no one need deem himself too poor or too sinful, or too insignificant to become a sharer in the benefits of Christ's sacrifice. Many were melted to tears by this discourse; but Ann was not among the number. She seemed to have wrapped herself up in her own persuasion, that salvation was not for her; and when the service was over, she left the church in her usual silent and unhappy mood. But Miss P——, a Sabbath-school teacher, met her at the door, and observing that she was alone, took advantage of the opportunity to speak to her on the state of her mind, and to walk home with her.

Miss P. I am glad to meet you, Ann; as I listened to the sermon, I could not help thinking that it was specially addressed to you.

Ann. To me? I wish I could think so; but there is no room for me, I fear.

Miss P. Why so? Have you any reason for thinking this bitter thought concerning yourself? If you have, tell me what it is.

Ann. I cannot. I had rather not talk about it at all; I don't think I ever can be saved.

Miss P. My dear girl, others besides you have been ready to say, "I am sure I can never be saved." I dare say you have found out that your heart is much worse than you had ever suspected, and you do not see how you can possibly make it better. Am I right in supposing this to be one cause of your trouble?

Ann. Yes, partly.

Miss P. There may be other causes too. The remembrance of broken resolutions, perhaps, adds to your distress, and

makes you doubt whether any new ones you might make would be kept any better. Is it not so?

Ann. Oh, Miss P——, pray don't talk about good resolutions; I wish I had never made one, for it is impossible, for me to keep them.

Miss P. Perhaps you feel that because of these broken resolutions, God is more angry with you than ever?

Ann. I feel as though I dare not lift up my face to God, after resolving so often to please him and always failing. But pray do not talk any more about this, I cannot bear it. It makes it plainer than ever that I cannot hope to be saved.

Miss P. You have prayed to God perhaps, and tried as you think, all the means prescribed in the Bible for the relief of conscience-stricken sinners. You have tried to repent, tried to believe, tried to reform, and yet your soul is as dark and as troubled as ever. You cannot discover that one answer has ever been given to your prayers. Your heart seems as hard and sinful as when you began to pray. There is no change for the better in any thing. You are almost persuaded that praying for pardon and peace is useless. Is it not so?

Ann. Yes, but even that is not the worst.

Miss P. Do you fear that Christ will not receive you?

Ann. My own heart tells me so.

Miss P. Your own heart is "deceitful above all things." Jer. 17: 9. It is often in league with Satan, who sometimes tries to ruin us by undue confidence, and sometimes by unwarranted despair. Therefore we can never rely upon the assertions of our own hearts, unless they are also supported by the Bible. Your duty is to listen to the solemn invitations of the gospel: "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Rev. 22: 17. "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." John 6: 37. "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure." 2 Peter 1: 10. Now let me put to you a simple but a very solemn question. Are you *called to repentance and faith*? Do you feel within you the workings of a sincere sorrow for sin, an earnest desire after salvation, some love to Him who died for the sins of the

world, and an intense longing to become a sharer in the benefits of his sacrifice? If you do experience these feelings, they are an evidence of the reality of God's work within you. Who do you think first awoke them within you? Must it not have been God's Holy Spirit? And is it likely that he would arouse and convince you if it were, as you suppose it is, impossible for you ever to be saved?

ANN. It would be wrong to charge God with so dealing with any one.

MISS P. An inquirer once came to Jesus with a difficulty very much like yours. "Lord," said he, "are there few that be saved?" And how did the Saviour meet his question? He told him nothing about the number of those who should be saved, whether they were many or few; but said, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." Luke 13: 23, 24. Do not stand outside, asking questions and raising doubts, but enter the gate of mercy.

ANN. You said just now that there are a great many passages in the Bible in which all sinners are invited to come to Christ. Will you tell me some more of these?

MISS P. Yes, indeed I will. There is Isa. 55: 1, which runs thus: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." There is John 3: 15, where it is said that "whosoever believeth in Christ shall not perish, but have eternal life." There is Matt. 11: 28, where Jesus says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." There is 1 John 2: 2, where we are expressly assured that Jesus Christ is "the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." There is Heb. 7: 25, where Paul tells us that Jesus "is able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him." There is 1 Tim. 1: 15, where we learn that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," sinners without any exception—nay, even the very "chief" of sinners. And if, when you get home, you will look at the references marked opposite to these passages, you will find many more to the same effect.

Ann. I wish I could believe all you have been saying. But my heart is so hard and sinful.

Miss P. Then pray to God as David did: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." And do not say, "I wish I could believe;" but say, "Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief." Make up your mind that what God says, he means: and that there is no hinderance in the way of your coming to him except in yourself. Just believe that for Jesus Christ's sake he is willing to forgive all your sins, and to treat you as his own dear child.

Ann. But how can I believe that God will look upon me as a dear child, when I am so vile and sinful?

Miss P. Will he not do it for Christ's sake? It is true that you are sinful, but then think of the infinite merits of our divine Redeemer, and how well pleased the Father is with him. It is not your righteousness that satisfies divine justice, but the righteousness of Christ. It is in Christ that God is reconciled unto us, not imputing our transgressions to us. 2 Cor. 5: 19. I am afraid, my dear, that in truth pride and self righteousness are keeping you away from Christ.

Ann. Pride and self-righteousness! Oh no, no!

Miss P. Are you so sure of that? Examine yourself, and I think you will find a reluctance to come to the Saviour just as you are; that is, as a very helpless, wicked creature. You would like to put on a better dress, before you venture to his footstool to ask for pardon. But by entertaining such a thought, you put a slight on the dress which Christ has provided for you. You make it appear as if the filthy rags of your own righteousness were better in your esteem, than the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness. And if this is not pride and self-righteousness, I do not know what to call it.

Ann seemed struck by this new thought.

Miss P. The fact is, you think too much about your sins, and about yourself, and too little about Jesus Christ. You stand still, cherishing your own conviction of unworthiness, and thinking yourself very humble and contrite; almost, indeed, making a merit of your contrition and humility, while in reality you are so proud that you will not look to the

meek and lowly Jesus, who is offering to take all your sins upon himself, and to clothe you with his own justifying righteousness. Don't think me unkind because I speak plainly to you, and tell you that in refusing to roll your burden upon Jesus and to trust him with your soul, when it is manifest that there is no other way of salvation open to you, you are really indulging pride and self-righteousness, more than if you were to declare outright that you hope to merit heaven by your own good works. You act as though you thought that Jesus offers to do more than he can perform, and that sooner than trust him alone for salvation, you would prefer to stand still and be lost.

ANN. Is it possible that I have treated Jesus, the loving Jesus, like this? And will he ever forgive me?

MISS P. Yes, he will. Peter denied him, yet Peter was forgiven. The dying thief reviled him, yet he was not rejected when he afterwards sued for mercy. Saul of Tarsus persecuted him, and yet afterwards he was favored with the highest tokens of his Saviour's love.

ANN. But none of these were half so bad as I am.

MISS P. Do you know who it was that said, "Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him?" You have no reason to despair.

ANN. I wish I could have made up my mind sooner, to talk to you about these things. I don't believe anybody has felt so miserable as I have the last few weeks.

MISS P. I once felt the same doubts and difficulties which have tried you so sorely. And let me tell you of another error I fell into, which, unless I mistake, has been leading you also astray. I knew that Jesus Christ had died to save sinners, and I fancied that by giving my assent to this fact, and feeling sorry for my sins, I had done all that was necessary to secure salvation. But as, with all this, I had never really *trusted Jesus with my soul*, never cast my sins by a simple living faith upon him, it is scarcely to be wondered at that I could not find any assurance that my sins were forgiven. Indeed, my distress seemed to increase every day; and often I used to cry out with bitter tears, "O God, I do believe in

Christ; I do repent of my sins. Why then am I not happier? What must I still do to obtain peace and pardon?" At length a faithful minister one day said to me, "You think you are believing, on Christ; but *you are trying to make faith and repentance your saviour.* You are not trusting to Jesus alone for pardon." Then a new light seemed to flash in upon me, and I was enabled to see the mistake I had made. I saw that in fact I was refusing to come to the Redeemer as sinful, polluted and vile, and was expecting to be saved for the sake of my own repenting and believing; whereas God was willing to pardon me only for the sake of his Son's sacrifice. And it was not until I had renounced this error that I obtained peace Does my case at all resemble yours?

Ann. I should never have thought that you had gone through all these troubles. And I never imagined before that there could be such a mistake as making faith and repentance a saviour, instead of Jesus Christ, But I begin to see what has been at the bottom of my distress; I have really been indulging in self-righteousness, when I fancied that I was altogether fee from it. I do think there is hope for me.

Miss P. I am truly glad to hear you say so. But do not forget that the only safe hope is that which is founded upon Jesus, and his perfect righteousness; which rests simply upon the atonement offered by the Saviour, without any merit or ground of acceptance being claimed from your own faith, or your own repentance, or any thing else that is yours.

Ann. I will try to trust in Jesus. I do feel that nothing of my own can purchase for me pardon from God; but that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.

Miss P. If you come to the cross humbly and penitently, there can be no doubt as to God's forgiveness, and you may say as Paul did, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the-law of sin and death." Rom. 8: 2.

Ann. Can it indeed be true that Jesus has saved me?

Miss P. God's Holy Spirit, by renewing your heart, will

bear witness with your spirit whether you are in reality a child of God. Only trust in Christ and follow him, and you need not fear. God bless you, and give you the sweet assurance that you are reconciled to him through his Son, and that all your sins have been washed away in the Saviour's blood.

Ann. Good night, dear Miss P——, and many, many thanks for all your kindness to me.

Miss P. Rather, thank God for his mercy. It is he who has done this for you, and it is he who must keep you to the end. May his grace ever be with you. Farewell.

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